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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Seventieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1868th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 16 October 2000, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. MEDINA QUIROGA

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the seventieth session of the Human Rights Committee.

ADDRESS BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Ms. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, having recently returned from an official visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and having observed in recent weeks the developing crisis in the Middle East, she was more conscious than ever of the value of the Human Rights Committee's work. The world clearly needed its guidance and the standards that it monitored and interpreted. Wishing the Committee every success at its current session, she congratulated those members who had been re-elected at the twentieth meeting of States parties to the Covenant and paid tribute to those who would be leaving at the end of the year.

3. One of the goals of the United Nations Millennium Assembly had been to support universal ratification of the core human rights treaties. She was pleased to announce that in September 2000 three additional States - Bangladesh, Botswana and Ghana - had become parties to the Covenant, two - Guinea-Bissau and Turkey - had signed and would, it was hoped, ratify it in the near future, and two - Ghana and Lesotho - had become parties to the Optional Protocol. As any increase in the number of ratifications placed an additional strain on the Committee, her Office had prepared a paper for circulation to the Millennium Assembly stressing the urgent need for additional resources for all human rights bodies.

4. She expressed strong interest in the informal meeting to be held with States parties during the session to discuss ways of improving the Committee's effectiveness and looked forward to studying its recommendations.

5. Her Office's first Annual Appeal for funds to finance a comprehensive programme to improve the servicing of the treaty monitoring system had been launched in January 2000. One of its key components was a plan to enhance the Office's capacity to process individual complaints under the various treaty-based procedures. The Office was in the process of recruiting competent lawyers for the Petitions Team whose establishment she had announced at the Committee's previous session and a coordinator would shortly be appointed. The Team would tackle the ever-increasing communications workload and the backlog of cases to be processed and considered, particularly those received in languages other than English, French and Spanish. It would provide substantive support to the three Committees with communications procedures - the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture - and would ensure proper coordination and a smooth flow of information for all treaty bodies. For instance, a Committee's expressions of concern and recommendations addressed to a specific State party under the reporting procedure should be consistent with recommendations made to the same State party under the complaints procedure. The main challenge would be to ensure coordination and consistency of the activities undertaken by all treaty bodies. It would constitute a doctrinal shift

involving a more open, flexible team and intellectually proactive support for treaty bodies. The Optional Protocol establishing a communications procedure for the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) had recently been adopted and would enter into force on 22 December 2000. The Petitions Team would be in close contact with CEDAW in that connection.

6. She had always been a firm believer in the fundamental value of the individual complaints procedure, which rendered the dry normative provisions of treaties alive and visible, concretizing legal principles and providing real remedies to identifiable victims. Case law was living law that not only clarified the meaning of a norm but frequently resulted in visible change. Thus, States parties had amended their laws, released prisoners, commuted death sentences and paid compensation to victims of violations of Covenant rights in response to recommendations by the Committee. Such success stories amply proved that its work was deserving of every support.

7. The Annual Appeal for 2001 would seek additional funds to meet the needs of treaty bodies, including their follow-up procedures. In that context, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Covenant and the Optional Protocol on 23 March 1976 should be properly celebrated during the Committee's next session in New York. She understood that the Committee was also compiling a collection of contributions, to be published in 2002, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee's first session in 1977.

8. She encouraged the Committee to consider adopting a general comment on racism and xenophobia. As the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was to be held in May 2001, it would be useful if the Committee could adopt its general comment at the beginning of its seventy-first session in March 2001. She knew that it took time to draft a closely reasoned text but she was equally sure that the Committee was aware of the enhanced attention a general comment would generate because of the convergence of forces at the World Conference, to be held in South Africa in August/September 2001.

9. The CHAIRPERSON, thanking the High Commissioner for her words of support, confirmed that the Committee urgently needed any additional assistance it could obtain through the regular budget or from other sources. She welcomed the establishment of the Petitions Team and expressed the hope that, together with the forthcoming consultations with States parties, it would promote closer coordination among the Committee, States parties and the Office of the High Commissioner in their joint task of protecting human rights throughout the world and bettering the lot of individual members of the international community.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CCPR/C/42)

10. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS:

(a) REPORT(S) OF THE CHAIRPERSON/RAPPORTEUR(S) OF THE PRE-SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP(S);

(b) WORKING METHODS;

(c) WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE;

(d) SPECIAL MEETING WITH STATES PARTIES

(agenda item 2)

11. The CHAIRPERSON, drawing attention to the draft programme of work, announced that the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan had sent a note verbale to the Office of the High Commissioner on 13 October 2000 stating that the Uzbek Government could not send representatives to the Committee's meetings devoted to the consideration of the initial report of Uzbekistan at the current session because its human rights experts would be attending an international conference in Tashkent on the enhancement of security and stability in Central Asia and a workshop in Warsaw organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Government requested that consideration of the report should be postponed until a later session.

12. Mr. KLEIN said that, as he had only just received the draft programme of work for the session, he was not fully prepared to deal with the report of Trinidad and Tobago that afternoon.

13. Mr. DE ZAYAS (Secretary of the Committee) said that, although he had given instructions for the transmission of the programme of work to Committee members, he had just learned that its dispatch had been held up by a delay in the translation of country reports to be mailed at the same time. He had taken due note of the oversight and assured the Committee that it would not be repeated.

14. Mr. LALLAH deplored the fact that he frequently found material for a Committee session awaiting him at home on his return from Geneva. He needed time to examine the four volumes of legislation covering all aspects of the Covenant that had been sent to the Committee by Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the material received from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). He asked whether consideration of the report could be deferred until the following day.

15. Lord COLVILLE said that the legislation and NGO material had been taken into account when the list of issues had been drafted. There were basically two new developments of note in the legislation: an Act extending the jurisdiction of the Police Complaints Authority and an Act amending the Offences against the Person Act. Both had been passed that year.

16. Ms. CHANET supported the proposal to postpone consideration of the report.

17. Mr. AMOR stressed the importance of the new documentation made available by Trinidad and Tobago. He suggested a 24-hour postponement until the afternoon of the following day.

18. The CHAIRPERSON said that the State party's consent was needed before any decision was taken.

19. Ms. EVATT, supported by Mr. YALDEN, suggested that the slot left vacant that afternoon should be devoted to consideration of the two communications that had been distributed to Committee members that morning. The slot left vacant by Uzbekistan could be used to discuss the progress report by the working group dealing with procedural matters and the draft general comment on article 4. She further suggested that the night meeting scheduled for the third week of the session should be reconsidered.

20. Mr. WIERUSZEWSKI said that, as Country Rapporteur for Uzbekistan, he was concerned about the State party's request for a postponement of the consideration of its initial report until the next session. If it had contacted the Committee sooner, a later date could have been set during the current session. He had received many communications from Uzbekistan in recent weeks regarding the deteriorating human rights situation there. Local NGOs would be dismayed at the postponement. He urged the Committee to express disappointment and to request additional information from the State party because the initial report would be very much out of date by the time the Committee considered it.

21. Ms. CHANET deplored the fact that a growing number of States parties were announcing their inability to attend the Committee's sessions at the very last minute, after receiving the list of issues. She suggested using the extra time available to discuss the progress report of the Working Group on Procedural Matters and, in that connection, to develop a joint position, for presentation to the special meeting with States parties, on States who "defaulted" at the last minute.

22. The CHAIRPERSON, noting the general agreement that priority should be given to the report of the Working Group on Procedural Matters, suggested that the document should be taken up that afternoon, in place of the third and fourth periodic reports of Trinidad and Tobago, as scheduled. If time allowed, and all the relevant members were present, the Committee could also start its consideration of available communications under the Optional Protocol.

23. The CHAIRPERSON, noting that the whole of 18 October could be used for the consideration of communications, said the Committee might wish to consider the possibility of bringing forward from 4.30 p.m. to 3 p.m. the informal meeting with States parties scheduled for 30 October. That would obviate the need for an extended meeting from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and make a shorter working day for the Committee.

24. Mr. BHAGWATI endorsed that suggestion.

25. Ms. LEE (Secretariat) pointed out that the interpretation to be provided at the extended meeting had been agreed with conference services on an exceptional basis; if the Committee decided to cancel the evening meeting, it would be very difficult to request similar arrangements in future.

26. The CHAIRPERSON disagreed. Presumably, the service had not yet been paid for, and so there was no reason why the Committee should be penalized for deciding to cancel a meeting it no longer deemed necessary.

27. Ms. LEE (Secretariat) said she was not in a position to provide information on the financial implications; she had merely wished to draw the Committee's attention to the difficulty with which arrangements for interpretation during the extended meeting had been made.

28. Mr. YALDEN endorsed the Chairperson's remarks. It was the Committee's prerogative to decide its own agenda and programme of work, and quite absurd that it should be subject to such rigid arrangements.

29. Mr. LALLAH pointed out that the States parties concerned would need to be informed of the suggestion to bring the meeting forward before the evening meeting could formally be cancelled.

30. The CHAIRPERSON said that the matter would be taken up without further delay. If there were any problems, she would inform the Committee at the following meeting; otherwise it should be assumed that the extended meeting was cancelled.

31. The CHAIRPERSON asked what progress had been made on the Committee's contribution to the World Conference against Racism. Would a draft document be ready for discussion during the current session?

32. Mr. BHAGWATI, said that, regrettably, the draft document was not yet ready.

33. Mr. LALLAH said that, like the High Commissioner, he had hoped the Committee's contribution would take the form of a general comment and would be ready as soon as possible, in order to ensure really useful discussion.

34. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee's contribution must be considered and approved during the March 2001 session in order to be ready for the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference, scheduled for May of the same year.

35. Mr. SCHEININ recalled that he, Mr. Bhagwati and Mr. Kretzmer had formed a small group to prepare a working document for discussion at the first session of the Preparatory Committee. Owing to logistical problems, it had not been possible to present the document during that session. The Committee could certainly continue its discussion on the basis of that document; however, he considered it unlikely that a draft general comment could be prepared and discussed during the current session.

36. The CHAIRPERSON said that the working document in question consisted of a summary of the Committee's jurisprudence with regard to racism and xenophobia and a one-page statement outlining its position on the subject. It was her understanding that something more was expected of the Committee, particularly by the High Commissioner.

37. Mr. SOLARI YRIGOYEN said the Committee had committed itself to preparing a more substantive document on the subject of racism and xenophobia, which he was to present at the forthcoming Preparatory Committee session. It was indeed regrettable that the Committee had been the only treaty body which had been unable to present a working document at the first session. He therefore urged Committee members to make the necessary effort to honour the Committee's commitment.

38. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that a small working group should be set up to prepare a draft document. Time would be allocated in the programme of work for discussion during the current session. The text must be finalized by the Committee's March session in time for its submission to the second session of the Preparatory Committee. She hoped that, by the following meeting, the Committee would have reached agreement on the membership of the group.

39. The draft programme of work, as amended, was adopted.

40. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to consider the report of the Chairperson/Rapporteur of the pre-sessional Working Group.

41. Mr. AMOR said that the pre-sessional Working Group comprising Mr. Bhagwati, Lord Colville, Ms. Evatt, Mr. Solari Yrigoyen and himself, and later Mr. Yalden, had held 10 meetings between 9 and 13 October. During that time presentations had been made by representatives of international organizations, including ILO and UNHCR, on the basis of written contributions, which had prompted a very constructive discussion. There had also been oral reports from NGOs, including PEN International and International War Resisters on States parties whose reports were due for consideration during the current session. Information had also been provided by the High Commissioner's Office staff on Croatia, Yugoslavia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Syria and the Dominican Republic. Recommendations had been adopted on the list of issues for all those countries with the exception of Yugoslavia.

42. The situation with regard to Yugoslavia had not been at all clear: the list of issues prepared by the Working Group at the sixty-seventh session had not been revised; the fourth periodic report submitted by Yugoslavia was not up to date and so the question of an addendum had been raised; no rapporteur for the State party had been appointed. Furthermore, the Chairperson of the Committee, who considered that the Working Group had not properly examined the Yugoslav report, had approached the Permament Mission of Yugoslavia in Geneva. It had therefore been decided to prepare a list of issues for another country whose report was due for consideration shortly, namely Guatemala. The secretariat had nonetheless prepared a file containing information on the situation in Yugoslavia from governmental and NGO sources.

43. The Working Group had considered several draft decisions relating to the Optional Protocol and had adopted one declaring a communication admissible. It had also adopted three recommendations to be considered by the Committee as a whole. The secretariat had informed him that other draft decisions would be submitted for consideration later in the week. The group had carried out its work in somewhat difficult circumstances, mainly due to translation problems. He therefore recommended that the Committee should give greater consideration to its preparatory work and the problem of translation in future. He paid tribute to the contributions to the group made by Lord Colville and Ms. Evatt, whose mandates expired at the end of 2000.

44. The CHAIRPERSON, clarifying remarks made by Mr. Amor with respect to Yugoslavia, said that on 12 October she had received a phone call from the Secretary of the Committee to ask whether she could authorize a decision not to consider Yugoslavia's report during the current session. In reply, she had addressed a memorandum to the pre-sessional Working Group explaining the background to the situation, in particular the problems that had been encountered during the previous session, and stressing that she had no power to alter the Committee's decision taken at that time. It would have been a different matter, however, if the State party itself had asked to defer consideration of its report. At no time had she made any contact with the Yugoslav Mission in Geneva as it was not within her competence to do so.

45. Ms. CHANET said it was her understanding that the Committee had decided at its previous session that at the current session the Working Group on Article 40 should consider the report of Yugoslavia and prepare a list of issues in that connection. She asked whether the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia had contacted the secretariat to request a postponement.

46. Ms. EVATT said that the Working Group had not been in a position to take up the report of Yugoslavia because no country rapporteur had been appointed and it had not been possible to complete a list of issues. If the Committee in fact wished to consider the report in March 2001 as originally decided, a final list of issues could probably be prepared in time.

47. Mr. AMOR said that in the beginning he had understood that the Working Group was to meet to prepare a draft list of issues for Yugoslavia and that the report would be considered by the plenary Committee in March 2001 in New York. He had been told at a later stage that that would not be possible. It was realized that there was no country rapporteur, and that the many changes that had taken place in the country had given rise to a number of questions. The Working Group had been told that it was its responsibility to ask the Yugoslav Mission whether any addendum to the report could be expected. The decision as to whether or not the Yugoslav report would be considered by the Committee in March 2001 was left to the Committee but in the meanwhile time had not been wasted and a reserve list of questions had been drawn up. It would be as well to have the situation clarified.

48. Mr. YALDEN said that, as far as the March 2001 session was concerned, the present political situation in Yugoslavia meant that the Committee could not expect to receive an addendum to the report in time for discussion in New York. Nor did he see how representatives of a new Government, such as would result from the elections to be held in December 2000, could be expected to come and defend the existing report. It would be illogical for the Committee to insist on taking up the report already before it; the sensible course would be to envisage postponing consideration of any report on Yugoslavia. The question was whether that

decision should be taken by the Yugoslav Mission or by the Committee. Given that there was probably no one in Belgrade who could instruct the Mission in what course it should take, it would probably be better for the Committee itself to make the decision.

49. The CHAIRPERSON said that she wished to make it clear that the question that had been addressed to her was not whether the Government of Yugoslavia or the Committee should decide whether the report should be taken up, but whether she herself was empowered to decide that the report should be postponed. The matter was for the Committee to decide and it could, if it wished, insist on maintaining the March 2001 date.

50. Mr. SOLARI YRIGOYEN said he believed that the report should be taken up in March 2001. The Committee had often been required to consider a report after a change of regime in the country in question. There had been a number of human rights violations in the period covered by the report, and the Committee's consideration and concluding observations could well encourage the new authorities to promote human rights more vigorously. He had already made it clear in the Working Group that he believed that, given the grave situation in regard to human rights in Yugoslavia, it would be wrong for the Committee to postpone its consideration indefinitely.

51. Mr. KLEIN said that Mr. Yalden had made a very reasonable case for postponing consideration of the report. However, if a new report was to be prepared, consideration of the situation in Yugoslavia would have to be postponed for more than one session. The report already in the Committee's possession covered the situation in years past, and the people of Yugoslavia and the new Government could well find it encouraging that at a time of such upheaval the Committee was following the situation in the country closely. If the new Government were to appear before the Committee in March, it would be possible to secure an undertaking from it that there would be a change for the better. If the Government simply failed to send a representative, it would not be the first time the Committee had faced such a situation. It would be wrong just to let the opportunity lapse and he therefore agreed with Mr. Solari Yrigoyen.

52. Mr. AMOR said that the discussion on how to deal with the report of Yugoslavia came within the scope of Mr. Klein's working group on the rules of procedure. It often happened that there were changes of political regime between the drafting of a report and its consideration. It could well happen in the case of Peru, for example. Mr. Yalden's point regarding the position of the Permanent Mission was understandable, but if the Committee were to accept that a change of government meant that it must receive a new report, it could find itself in a dead end. The Committee should deal with the report already in its possession.

53. Ms. GAITAN DE POMBO also felt that the Committee was duty-bound to take up the report on Yugoslavia which it had already received, in March 2001 as had been decided.

54. Ms. CHANET said that not to do so would, in her experience, be the first time a decision by the Committee was not followed up. The fact that a country rapporteur had not been appointed and that no list of issues had been drawn up might give the impression that Yugoslavia was receiving special treatment. The Committee must abide by its original decision.

55. Mr. LALLAH asked why a country rapporteur could not be appointed immediately.

56. Mr. BHAGWATI said that a country rapporteur should be appointed and the list of issues finalized. The Committee must not be seen to be treating Yugoslavia differently from other countries.

57. Mr. SCHEININ agreed that the report should be discussed at the March session. However, the transitional situation in Yugoslavia should be taken into account in drawing up the list of issues. He did not feel that that would constitute special treatment.

58. Mr. WIERUSZEWSKI noted, in connection with the list of issues, that part of Yugoslavia was currently under international jurisdiction. The whole population of Kosovo should be able to benefit from the provisions of the Covenant. Should Mr. Kouchner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, be asked to provide information? The Committee could not turn a blind eye to events there.

59. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to discuss among themselves the appointment of a new country rapporteur who would take up the various matters that had been raised at the sixty-ninth session. She invited the Committee to turn to the question of a new date for consideration of the report of Uzbekistan.

60. Mr. AMOR felt that the decision should be left until after the consideration of Mr. Klein's report. The necessary change of date would inconvenience not only the Committee itself, but also other States parties.

61. Mr. SOLARI YRIGOYEN said that the Committee should take the same attitude towards Uzbekistan as it had to the cases of Peru and Venezuela. It had already established jurisprudence in respect of unforeseen absences of States parties. There should be further communication with the State concerned and, if the State party then said that it was unable to appear, the Committee could decide what course to adopt.

62. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that the Committee had already received a statement in writing from the State concerned to the effect that it could not attend. Should it then reply that it was unable to accept that decision?

63. Mr. AMOR said that the Committee should do so. It had taken that course in the case of Peru and Venezuela. Sending such a communication was not a mere formality because it was necessary to make it clear that it was for the Committee to set the date. A final answer from Uzbekistan was needed in order to affirm the Committee's right to do that and to refuse to allow last-minute changes that forced the Committee itself and other States to alter their arrangements.

64. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that the Committee had already changed its programme of work and it might be difficult to find room for further public meetings.

65. Mr. SOLARI YRIGOYEN said that there was nothing to prevent the Committee from changing its programme again if Uzbekistan said that it would attend. By taking that approach, the Committee would be affirming its right as a decision-making body. If Uzbekistan then said

that it would come, the programme could be reshuffled very quickly. Uzbekistan should not be treated in a different way from other countries. Furthermore, the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan was very serious.

66. The CHAIRPERSON noted that it had been formally proposed that a letter should be sent to Uzbekistan informing it that it should appear as scheduled.

67. Mr. AMOR suggested that the Committee should wait until Mr. Klein's report had been considered and take its decision in the light of the discussion.

68. The CHAIRPERSON said that, while she would not object to such a procedure, a letter would need to go out immediately if it was to be effective.

69. Mr. BHAGWATI said that he was not in favour of immediately sending a letter saying that Uzbekistan must come on the scheduled date. An alternative date might be suggested during the last week of the session. It was not right for the Committee to insist on the attendance of Uzbekistan despite its other commitments. Although there was no real excuse for the proposed absence, in view of what had already been said it might be better for the Committee to wait until Mr. Klein's report had been discussed before it set an alternative date.

70. Lord COLVILLE pointed out that even if the Committee were to wait until after it had considered section (c) of the Working Group's report, which dealt with situations such as the one under discussion, it would still have to decide how to deal with the report of Uzbekistan. To ask the delegation to appear at the current session, and then, if it again refused to do so, to drop the matter, seemed to him the worst possible option because it would mean that the Committee was allowing itself to be dictated to by the State party. On the other hand, to deal with the report in the absence of the delegation would also cause problems, since the rules of procedure as now drafted did not provide for such a course of action. If it was eventually decided to change the rules, States parties would have to be given due notice of such changes before they could be acted upon.

71. Mr. YALDEN shared that view. He reminded the Committee that the note verbale stating that the State party could not attend had come from New York and not from its Mission in Geneva. Because of the need for consultations with Tashkent, there was likely to be considerable delay before the Committee received any reply to its communication, which would make it very difficult properly to manage the time available.

72. It would be an extraordinarily arbitrary action on the part of the Committee to change the rules of procedure in the course of the current session without giving States parties due notice.

73. The CHAIRPERSON, summing up, said there seemed to be agreement that a new date would have to be set for consideration of Uzbekistan's initial report. If the Working Group's report was approved and it was decided to change the rules of procedure, a letter could be sent to the State party, expressing disappointment at its failure to attend and announcing the changes decided on.

74. Mr. SOLARI YRIGOYEN suggested that now the report of Guatemala was to be dealt with in March 2001, the report of Uzbekistan could be taken up in July of that year.

75. The CHAIRPERSON, on a point of information, recalled that in July the Committee had taken the decision that she should contact the Mission of Viet Nam concerning an indigenous group whose representatives she and Mr. Bhagwati had met (see CCPR/C/SR.1866, paras. 25-46). However, apparently as a result of a misunderstanding, the secretariat had sent the Mission a direct request for a report.

76. She next invited comments on the informal paper she had prepared, entitled "Draft agenda for the informal meeting with States parties, 30 October 2000".

77. Mr. LALLAH noted that it was the first occasion on which States parties had decided as a group to approach the Committee, perhaps because of certain negative aspects of their relations with it. Care should be taken not to approach the informal meeting in a spirit of antagonism. The time had come to extend the Covenant functions of the Committee beyond the mere examination of reports, and to broaden the dialogue to include various sectors within the State party, notably the judiciary. It was true that the secretariat had already conducted training programmes in various countries, but what needed to be established was a dialogue with the Committee, rather than with the secretariat, in the form of exchanges of ideas. Such exchanges could best be arranged on a regional basis, grouping States with a common legal system in, for instance, Latin America, the Commonwealth countries and the Francophone countries. States parties should be made aware that they would have to make some kind of financial input in order to enable the exchanges to take place.

78. He suggested that the exchanges envisaged might perhaps be termed "colloquiums", and that under agenda item 6 "Seminars and training at national level" should be amended to read "Exchanges of ideas at national level".

79. Ms. EVATT commended the draft agenda, which was a comprehensive list of problems faced by the Committee and by States parties in relation to both reporting and communication procedures. She suggested that it might be helpful if the Chairperson could give an introductory statement to each agenda item at the informal meeting, in order to stimulate discussion and to hear what practical proposals States parties might have for solving the problems listed.

80. Mr. AMOR supported that suggestion.

81. Lord COLVILLE pointed out that it would be difficult both in budgetary terms and in terms of time to organize the exchanges of ideas envisaged outside Committee sessions. Under item 7, he suggested that States could be asked whether they saw the need for further informal meetings. The existing text could be amended to read "Usefulness of continuing these informal meetings on a periodic basis".

82. Mr. BHAGWATI did not think it would be possible to obtain further budgetary allocations for meetings outside the Committee's sessions. The issue of funding would have to be taken up with States parties themselves, either at national or at regional level. He suggested that States should encourage national NGOs to make alternative reports, which would greatly facilitate the Committee's work.

83. Mr. KLEIN, welcoming the draft agenda, suggested that under item 6 emphasis should be laid on the point that States parties also had a collective responsibility to ensure that other States respected the rights enshrined in the Covenant. That could be achieved not only by invoking article 41, but also by convening meetings of States parties to discuss problems encountered in that respect.

84. The CHAIRPERSON said she took it the Committee now wished to approve the draft agenda, as amended.

85. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.